



Legendary Strength Podcast

How to Learn Parkour with Thomas Tapp Part

2

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Hey, Logan Christopher back with Legendary Strength Podcast and in this episode we are continuing where we left off last week with the interview with [Thomas Tapp](#), our core athlete. So let's dive right into it, picking up right we left off.

Logan: One big thing about parkour is being able to do it safely. It sort of is a contact sport in itself. Could you give us tips and ideas on what you need to do to make this as safe as possible?

Thomas: One of the biggest tips and it's really simple is just gradual progression. If you're looking at doing a move and it's scaring you, you're really struggling with it, and you can't imagine doing it, you probably shouldn't go for it. Start in an area where you're comfortable. If you're doing a convault, which is where you jump over a ledge and you carry your legs through your hands, start off by something you're comfortable with. Most people are comfortable with doing it where they just lift their legs up to the ledge.

It's kind of hard to explain over the phone but you just take a movement that you're comfortable with and then you gradually progress into it. So you take baby steps and you eventually get to that goal that you want. It's pretty much like anything else, just like a [handstand](#). You start off in an area you're

comfortable with and you build up that strength and coordination. Then you eventually get to your handstand.

Logan: Yeah. I liken it to people entering the gym and just trying to pull a 500-pound deadlift on their first day. You really do need to build up to it in a sequential and smart manner. By doing that, one, you're going to be a lot more safe and you're actually going to make progress way faster than just going for the hard move right off the bat.

Thomas: Yes, that's exactly a good analogy. That was perfect. You start off with learning the technique. You start off with five-pound weights or whatever. You get that down then you gradually increase. It's just like you said, you'll find that you learn a lot faster and you're a lot safer.

Logan: Sometimes, that's the only way to overcome that fear, to go really small steps at a time. I remember when I was learning [how to do a back flip](#), I couldn't even do one on a trampoline so I had to go very slowly but now it's to the point where I can do them quite easily.

Thomas: Yeah, the back flip, man, that's a scary one. I had the same issue. I'm a big fan of taking baby steps. Sometimes when I train with people, they can't believe some moves I just start off so small and I just build my way up.

Logan: When you're out there training, do you warm up and do you start with small moves before going bigger?

Thomas: Yeah. It's very crucial. I do exactly that, too. I make sure to warm up. I'd recommend at least 10 or 15 minutes warm up. I go about 30 minutes usually where I just do light exercises structured throughout my body. Then I'll do movements that I'm comfortable with to build up my confidence so I'll start with just a small precision, no risk, and then build up from there, and start doing a little riskier stuff like back flips. Then if my body is feeling up for it, that's when I start doing top level stuff. It's always in that order: nice warm up, light exercises, then go into the training and things like that.

Logan: Would you call yourself an intuitive trainer? Do you basically go by how you feel in the day? So if it's like, I'm feeling really good I'm going to go for harder stuff right now?

Thomas: Yeah. At first, I didn't. I would force a lot of things. That's one thing I would definitely recommend for people, not to force the movement because that's how you get those injuries. You really have to listen to your body. That's something that comes with time, especially if you're not used to physical training.

Once you start training a lot, you'll start to realize when your body is good to go for a move, when it's not. That's one thing I really do, listen to my body and I really take my workout easy on the day with how my body feels. Like today, if I'm supposed to be doing a pull-up workout and my arms are really sore, if I feel like my shoulders are not really there, then I'll do some light pull-ups then I'll move to something else.

Logan: Yeah. I think that's one of the biggest things for people to learn that, like you said, it does come with time, learning how to listen to your body. When you do that, you can make better progress and avoid injuries. Do you have any other tips for people about how to do things safely beside warming up and starting small, building up from there and listening to your body?

Thomas: Definitely diet and then one thing that people don't touch on just the mentality. When you're training, you don't want to be thinking about how you're getting injured the whole time. You want to be very positive during your training sessions. Be aware of those fears that you have but don't always think about that. Always train with confidence and enjoy your training. That's one thing that I think helps with getting injured. Some people go off to train, they worry too much about getting hurt, and they just live in and train in that mental state. It just doesn't ever end well.

You can see in their movements when they're mentally not confident. If you're physically not capable of doing the movement, you're not going to be confident with it but I've seen people who are physically capable and know the technique but you can tell mentally they just don't want to go to that level. That's another thing, just having that positive attitude during your training, not harping on the negative outcomes that could happen from it.

Logan: I did some gymnastic training as a kid but as an adult a few years back, I noticed some people, the first time trying a move, would be able to just chuck it and do it really well. Other people, without doing that sort of break down and approaching it step by step couldn't do it. I'm actually in that's second group, unfortunately. Any sort of ideas that can maybe help a person go from one to the other?

Thomas: I've seen that same thing and I've been trying to figure that out because I have a friend who's basically like an Olympic gymnast. He went to Penn State and he's in [Cirque du Soleil](#), just a phenomenal athlete. He's one of those guys that can throw something and he lands it or he can go over something and he's not going to get hurt.

I think one of those is just the way you train. If you train, done physical stuff all your life, you know your body so well and you know how to take a fall that you can recoup or you can take a bad fall and land it or something. It's just insane. His body coordination and body [\[inaudible 0:36:01.2\]](#) is out of the roof. I think some of that can be genetics, too. Also, his mentality is just insane. He knows he's not going to get hurt so that can play a factor, too.

I'm in the same boat as you. I have to break it down and really learn it. So I'm not sure if there really is a way to move from either category but I know exactly what you're talking about.

Logan: The important thing is you can make great progress regardless of which category you fall into.

Thomas: Exactly.

Logan: Do you have any other tips on what you do to overcome fear, like when you're out trying one of those harder moves besides making sure that you're ready physically? What do you do to prepare yourself mentally?

Thomas: Usually, a big thing is ritual. If you do your warm ups, you want to do the same warm ups every time. You want to do the light exercises about the same every time so. Your following this ritual so your brain is used to going through this ritual and then automatically it knows it's ready to do the movements or to go along and do this thing. For example, you wake up in the morning, you drink water, and you do your thing. You want to keep a ritual so that mentally, you're used to that ritual.

Logan: In some gymnastic facilities, they have like crash pads and stuff, how essential or non-essential is that to train? Do you train a lot when you have padding around and whatnot versus being outside where if you fall, it can be more dangerous?

Thomas: That's a really good point. Mats can be awesome. They can be great for your training but they can also be detrimental in a way just through the fact I've seen kids where they train parkour in a gym and they have the movements down, they can do all this cool stuff, and then when they go outside, it's a totally different world. They struggle a lot with transitioning that.

So I would definitely recommend working on harder movements in a gym but really work on transitioning that outside as quick as you can. At first, I didn't have access to the gym so it was pretty normal just doing stuff outside but an easy way to do that is to use a crash mat and take it outside. I did that later on. I'd do a movement in a gym and I'd bought a crash mat from some rock-climbing/bouldering place. I would take that mat outside, work on the concrete, and have that mat there just to kind of make me feel comfortable and work on the movements there when there was a mat. Again, it's like a gradual progression. So you start off a lot of mats, start reducing the mats, and then you do it outside.

Logan: Yeah. I found the same exact thing when I was doing the back flip. Once again, I started off from a tall height into a crash pad and gradually lowered that height. Even when I was jumping off was with level, the whole mental leap just to do that on the gymnastic floor, and then a whole other mental leap just to do it outside in the grass.

Thomas: Yeah. I think people listening should just be aware of that that transition is going to happen. If you practice at the gym, it's going to be really scary outside so just be aware of it.

Logan: Okay. I think we've covered a good amount on safety and overcoming fear but are there any other tips for what people can do outside to make sure that they stay safe?

Thomas: Yeah. One thing that we really got to do is when people first see parkour, they think you just go outside and you run on all these obstacles. One thing you always have to do is check our surroundings. When you reach a spot and you want to train at it, make sure to go by. Get a feel on all the rails. Make sure they're not loose. Make sure there are no loose bricks. Make sure everything is sturdy and safe. Just really be aware of your surroundings and know that it can hold your weight or you don't have to worry about it falling apart. That's one thing that I think people get hurt on and they can easily be over.

Logan: Okay. Like you said, people try to move towards the advanced tricks too quickly. There is of course a whole bunch of different moves but the essential moves, what would you say are some things

that people should probably spend more time on just really perfecting like learning how to land and roll, anything that helps besides that that's really essential to make it, like you said before, as easy as walking?

Thomas: Like you said, the basic landing and the parkour roll are pretty essential. You need to be practicing that a hundred times a day or a hundred times every other day to really get those down. Then your wall runs, that's very important. That's where you run up the wall, grab, and muscle up. There are a lot of different factors, a lot of leg strength and upper body strength.

Also, the vaults, the ones I use primarily are convaults, the safety vaults, and the speed vaults. I would really drill those three vaults to get them down. What I like to do is really train for it, especially people just getting into it, you want to train the stuff that you're going to be using if you're in a lot of situations. The wall runs come in handy, those three vaults, landing to roll, also your precision jumps, being able to jump from one ledge to another with accuracy. We just work on that by starting out small again, jumping to the curb then going a little bit higher, then going from rail to rail, things like that.

Then just working on your stride. A lot of people don't focus on that but being able to run to your obstacle without stutter stepping so you can run to your obstacle that you're going to jump over or that you're going wall run with all the efficiency that you need.

Logan: Do you train going off of both legs for all the different vaults? How do you do that?

Thomas: Yeah. You want to train both sides and you want to train going off both legs. That's one thing I didn't really do at the beginning of my training until I was able to train with some of the founders. One thing they really focused on is getting both sides. If you're doing your speed vaults, if you're going to go to one side, you want to train both sides.

Logan: Yeah. Are there any tips you can give as far as how to measure your progress? Are you trying to just increase the amount of reps you can with a certain thing or do you always just look for a bigger or harder tricks or longer leaps?

Thomas: Yeah. It depends on what your goals are. For me, when I first started, and I've gone away from this, one of the things I did which I think a lot of people do this mistake is you watch other people's YouTube videos and you're like, *"Oh, man. He just did that"* so you end up chasing these other people's movements when really you should just focus on your own training. You can learn from them but don't make it a priority where you're just constantly trying to one up or chase their moves. It really depends on your goals and what you really want out of parkour.

Logan: Yeah. On average, I guess some people seem to make really fast progress depending on if they have a good foundation. Other people take longer but are there any sort of general ideas you can give about how long should someone stick on working on like a specific trick or whatever they're going for before moving onto something more difficult?

Thomas: Yeah. That's a tough one because it pretty much depends on the person. Usually I like to focus on something for about a month or a week, and really have it down, depending on the move but usually

about a month. Things like the back flip, I still want to perfect that even more so it's like some things will take years of training and developing, depending on the moves that you're doing and then of course the person that's doing it.

Logan: Do you find that sometimes you like work something over and over again then other days, maybe the next time you come back, you just try a harder version of it that you go sort of back and forth between? What I do with a lot of bodyweight exercise and lifting is I work with different loads so a similar sort of concept, sometimes doing easier ones, sometimes doing harder.

Thomas: Yeah. It's kind of like when I was working my cork. That's a flip that you do. You do like a 360 spin. It's almost like a gainer. It's almost like a cheat gainer. I would work on my cheat gainers for a long time, just like a lot, and it's like an easier flip. Then I would work on my cork a little bit and I kind of go back and forth with that. It's kind of similar. It's a little different but I definitely like to mix it up, like you were saying, where you're kind of mixing heavy loads and then you do a bunch of light reps.

I do that with some of my basic training, too. For example, I'll work on endurance training so I'll hold a horse stance for several minutes or something and work on that. One day, I'll just do several holds like that or hang on a bar for as long as I can. I'd do that about once a week or so and then the rest of my workouts are usually explosive training where I'm really building up that explosive strength.

Logan: Yeah. That makes sense. Could you describe some of the biggest mistakes you made early on in your training that you'd like to pass on to other people so that they'd have to make them?

Thomas: I got one. We kind of touched on this earlier but don't go too big at first. Like the first thing I did, it was jump off my house. You don't want to do that when you're starting off. That's how you can get severely injured at first. You've got to build up that foundation and really build up those basics. I know it's hard for someone when you see those videos. You're like, *"Oh, man. We've got to do that now."* You've got to hold back and know that it's going to be a lot safer and you're going to get a lot better by training small and then working your way up.

Another thing is listening to your body. We talked about that earlier, too. One of the injuries I got, a pretty good high ankle sprain, and that was because I was training on it. We usually have jams and if you're not familiar with jams in parkour, it's just where a lot of us get together and we train parkour the whole day. It's a good community experience. We're all just having a good time and training how to get new moves and things like that.

It was at the end of the day on this jam that we're all fatigued and stuff. I was going for this wall, up to this like six-foot ledge, and I just wanted to get it. My body was fatigued. I knew I shouldn't have been trying to go for it but I was like, *"Man, I just want to get it. I've got to one up it."* So I went for it and my foot slipped at the top. I fell back and landed straight on my ankle from that high. I felt a little crack. Oh, man. There goes my ankle. Luckily, it was just a really bad ankle sprain but listening to your body and knowing that when you reach that fatigued point, you probably shouldn't be doing risky things. You can still train but do it at a low and safe level.

Also, I learned from one of the founders, too, and I got another ankle injury because of this. One thing I have always been afraid of is trampolines, man. I don't know why I don't like trampolines so much but I was working for this half-time show. Have you ever seen those guys who do aerial dunks where they hit off the mini-tramps and do these crazy dunks, flips, or whatever? While I was working with one of the half-time show guys. He was like the old man's man. He was showing us how to do this mini-tramp work and I was so scared of doing it. I never felt comfortable while I was training there but I didn't want to let that stop me from doing what I thought was a good opportunity.

I should have listened to my instincts there and not have been training it because during one of my basic moves, I was going to hit it, do a front flip, and try to dunk, but I hit, went straight up, hit the front flip, but I missed the landing mat. One foot landed on the mat, one foot didn't, and it just popped my ankle out of its socket. It was stuck to the side for a while and I had to wait three hours to get it pulled back in place. I was out for about six months. I should have just listened to my instincts on that.

So for anyone listening, if you're ever in a situation where you don't really feel comfortable with the move, there is always another day. You don't have to force yourself to go for the move. You can put it to the side and build it up later. If you start to feel it the next day then go for it but always listen to that.

Logan: Yeah. I'm not really surprised actually at how many people say the same thing. Right before they get injured, they're saying to themselves, *"It's not feeling good. I shouldn't be doing this,"* but they do it anyway then bam, something happens.

Thomas: Exactly, man.

Logan: You mentioned college campuses and some other places, any other ideas on finding locations because from what I've seen, that seems to be a big stumbling block for a lot of people. They say they've got nowhere to train. Also, could you talk about just setting up your home to do some training? I know you can do the different workouts, different sort of exercises but can you set up like simple stuff to work on as well?

Thomas: Yeah. That's one big thing my brother and I had to deal with because we live in a small country town. We had schools but we were at the age where we couldn't drive a car and we were stuck at home all the time and there wasn't anything we could really walk to. So what we did was just create in our backyard, a little area, just created our own training ground in our backyard.

Basically, all you need it a couple of precision trainers, the precision trainers that we'd have were just two by fours cut, and different landing areas. We just worked on jumping to those and then we just used an old box. It was about waist height. We used that for Kongs and vaults. Then we had a tree that we created some rings. We just got some old metal rings and put them up on there. We had a little training school back there. You can do that.

Also just one thing that I think that a lot of people—I think this happens to a lot of beginners. They don't have the training spots—is because when you're first starting off, they call it parkour vision, you don't really have your parkour vision. So you walk by some really cool spots and I notice this later on, spots

that I could have trained in my hometown really good but I just never saw it because I wasn't aware of it. That's one thing I think a lot of guys aren't taught early in their training, they don't have that parkour vision. That just comes with training, getting used to it, and also about being creative. One of the good things about parkour is that's what it's supposed to be about, being creative.

So you can take a picnic table and make it into something amazing. That's one of the things my brother and I have been kind of trying to do lately. We have a video called [Tapp Brothers versus Cold Play](#). We took little objects like simple ledges, simple railings, and things like this to show you can take something like that and really make it into an art form or for training. You can basically train there.

Logan: That's awesome.

Thomas: I think getting your parkour vision and also being creative with what you have and using that to influence your style. So if you live in an area where there's just flat grass everywhere then you can work on your ground tumbling, your breakdancing skills, and your rolls. You use that to incorporate your styles. One guy at Live Wire, he has amazing handstands and amazing upper body strength but one of the reasons he got that way was because his knees gave him problems. He'd had surgery so he was out for a long time so he was able to adapt to that.

So even if you don't have a good place to train, you can still be train and be creative, build your obstacles or use just what you've got, and make that into your style. I think that's our take from that.

Logan: Yeah. That's a great tip. I think that will be helpful to people. I guess right now the question is: Could you tell us a little bit about your website, what you offer there, and how that can help people take it to the next level where they can actually learn moves rather than just all about the training information, which I'd say is at least as important if not more so?

Thomas: Yeah. Definitely. So our site, [LearnMoreParkour.com](#). I would definitely recommend if you haven't, you've got free five-day parkour course so we go through a few basic movements, the key ones, like the basic running, the parkour roll, and the wall run. We really break it down and tutorials and that's completely free. So you just go on a website, put your email in, and we'll give you a free course. Also, throughout the weeks, we also give you a lot of great training tips and tutorials. So you can go check that out.

Also, check our [YouTube channel](#). There are some great tutorials out there. If you really want to be serious or take it to the next level, we have a [crash course in parkour](#). A lot of people around the world have loved that. It has a 60-day training schedule. It really takes you from square one or from the starting all the way to where you're doing a full run in parkour. That's a really good one. It has all the basic tutorials and basic movements. There are some great bonuses as well so we can talk about it slow and building that up. So if you're looking at getting into parkour, that's a program I'd definitely recommend checking it out.

Then if you're looking to learn flips, we have a [really good program on getting your back flip](#). This is one of the things that's the scariest flip for all of us to learn. I was able to learn it outside without any gyms or spotters. I'll show you step by step how to do that.

Then recently, we just put out *In-Home Parkour Fitness*, which is a 60-day program. This is specifically for building up that base strength. So we go over all those seven points, speed, power, strength, agility, stamina, flexibility, and mobility. What's really cool about this program is it's a 30-minute workout each day and you follow us at your home or on your phone because it's mobile ready so you watch it on your phone. We go through 60 days of training and it's really cool.

We also have a [human flag program](#). It's pretty cool so if you're looking at going to that next level, your strength training. What I would recommend though is not to just start doing human flag or trying to learn your human flag until you build up that base foundation of strength.

Logan: Great overview. I've already told a lot of people about them. Seeing your programs, like your back flips, like you said, you teach how to do it without spotters, without equipment, and that approach is really amazing because I did learn with spotters and equipment. If you have that available, that's a good way to go but if you don't you actually have a really solid approach for doing that. Of all the acrobatic moves, I have to say the back flip is probably one of the most impressive. That's one when I'm at the park and I'm doing that among other things but especially if there are children around, "*Oh, can you do that again?*" and all that. It captures their imagination.

Thomas: That's so true. It's really funny. That's so true because when you start flipping anywhere it's like you're a good.

Logan: Yeah. Since I was a kid, I'd just imagine. I was completely unathletic as a kid and anything but if just one day I could do a back flip. Once I got to that, I was like okay, I've accomplished something. It took a lot of work but it was well worth it.

Thomas: Yeah. Pretty amazing.

Logan: Okay. Well, any final thoughts before we wrap up for today?

Thomas: None, man. I really appreciate you having me on, interviewing me. I love your site. I love what you're doing, handstand stuff, incredible so I really appreciate that. To everyone out there, let's train today and thanks for listening.

Logan: All right. Thank you very much, Thomas, and thank you everyone for listening. Have a good day.